

THE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

The
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Priority

New Jersey Bankruptcy Lawyers Advisory Committee

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INTERVIEW WITH JIM WALDRON

By: Ross J. Switkes and Shoshana Schiff

For over 32 years, Jim Waldron enthusiastically served as the Clerk of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey. Throughout his tenure, Jim led this Court through a litany of legislative and financial challenges, significant expansion and transition, and sweeping technological development. Jim's tireless public service was never limited to his official duties as Clerk, instead, among other initiatives, he championed our Lawyers Advisory Committee, spent countless hours supporting and creating programming for the Court's historical society, and served on national committees working to better our nation's bankruptcy courts. Jim's efforts have built the foundation on which this Court stands, and has undoubtedly prepared it for future innovation and excellence.

The Lawyers Advisory Committee extends our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Jim for his incredible, selfless efforts throughout the years and for taking the time to participate in this interview. We wish him the best of luck in all of his future endeavors.

What are you most excited about doing after your retirement? Do you have any plans?

Well, initially I thought I would just be volunteering for several different organizations. But as things do, that changed rather quickly. I had certainly planned to be more involved with NJBLF, but I was contacted through Linked-In by a group that hailed from both my mother's and father's family homeland in County Mayo, Ireland. The County Mayo Foundation is a group dedicated to raising funds from the descendants of County Mayo immigrants living in the United States. Several hundred non-profit/charitable organizations in County Mayo have been identified as the potential recipients of these funds. I was asked to sit on the Board of the Foundation.

Shortly thereafter I was contacted by Duke Law School to take a part-time position as their Director of EDM (Electronic Discovery Reference Model). I will begin this on February 1, 2017 and it is an area that I am very excited about. It marries together my deep interests in new and emerging technologies with judicial and case administration. I have also spoken with a couple of firms that deal in ancillary services for bankruptcy cases but have not made any commitments.

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You have accomplished a great amount in your 32+ years as Clerk. What do you think is your biggest accomplishment?

Well, frankly I don't consider any of the projects where we have been successful as my accomplishments. Everyone is aware of the strong team that we have working at the Court in New Jersey. Certainly, we are proud of being able to lead efforts in a number of technological areas, but I think we are most proud of the level of service that we always tried to provide. The bankruptcy courts have gone through significant resource reduction efforts as well as the recent drop off in filings. This has had a severe impact on morale as well as the pressure to continue to maintain that level of service. We are still one of the five largest courts in the country and therefore it has been important to keep our experienced staff intact. If I were to pick specific projects I would certainly have to say that instituting electronic filing in our district was the biggest. However, we are equally proud of our efforts in standardizing the web interface for all federal courts in the country and our electronic petition filing for pro se litigants.

How have you seen the bankruptcy practice change? What do you believe is the biggest change?

Well that is a pretty tough question for me to answer. In the Clerk's office, we see the practice of law from 10,000 feet. Certainly, BAPCPA in 2005 changed quite a lot of things. I would have to guess that once again technology is what has emerged as the biggest difference in how things are done. I remember doing statewide seminars on the new CM-ECF system promising lawyers how it was going to change their lives and revolutionize the practice of law. There were many panicked lawyers who told us they could never do it. I believe we did drive some of them out of bankruptcy practice but everyone soon found out that this was just not going to be a bankruptcy thing. One sad development has been the flight of large chapter 11 cases as well as significant chapter 7 asset cases out of our district to two surrounding districts. I often wondered if there was something that we were doing wrong or something that we could possibly change or enhance to bring those cases back. After I saw that we were not alone but rather that cases from all over the country were going to those districts, I felt that there were other forces at work totally out of our control. I have no doubt that our Court and the Judges of this Court are just as capable, if not more capable, because of the mix of cases that are assigned to them and the dedication and quality of their work.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the Clerk's office?

The challenges are many and diversified. They are basically the same no matter where you go in the country although magnified in some areas. One of the difficult things we have dealt with in recent years has been funding of the courts. As you probably know the Judiciary is not funded in isolation but in relation to other federal programs. We have been very fortunate that Congress has treated us well in recent years but relatively the bankruptcy courts have taken a disproportionate reduction within the judicial budget. In part that has to do with our dramatic decrease in filings which has also impacted the revenue that we realize from the PACER System (Public Access to Court Electronic Records). What many people don't realize is that much of our ability to deliver electronic filing and case management comes from the funds we receive from PACER. Also, much of the revenue that the bankruptcy courts receive in filing fees and PACER revenue goes to assisting other court types

and not just bankruptcy. Every year we go through the same anxiety of not knowing whether a budget will be passed and what percentage cut we will have to endure. It's not a great way to run a railroad never mind a billion-dollar enterprise but it is what we are stuck with.

Additionally, so many courts have an aging workforce. Our Court has just gone through a dramatic change by losing a large number of experienced employees and Judges. Because of a lack of hiring in the last 10 years, we will lose large numbers of experienced employees all at once. They will be difficult to replace and in the midst of that will probably be more statutory and technological changes in the field of bankruptcy.

Is our LAC modeled off other LAC's? Do most jurisdictions have active LAC's?

Our LAC was modeled after our District Court's LAC. When I started with the Court in 1984, I had just left the District Court's Clerk's Office. I had seen their LAC in action and Judge Commisa informally gathered a group of lawyers together. He appointed Judge William Lipkin to chair a complete rewrite of the Court's local rules. Later it was formalized under Judge Gindin. Honestly I am not aware of the extent of the LAC model in other federal bankruptcy courts but I am sure that they exist in one form or another.

How have you seen the LAC grow and change during your time as Clerk?

Sure, the LAC has changed in many ways. Initially it was organized to be a sort of recommendation board to help improve the practice. With different local cultures this was not necessarily the easiest thing to do. Some Judges welcomed some of the changes but often many of the recommendations were cast aside by the entire board, even after extensive developmental work on the part of the lawyers. Judges were not part of the original committee because they didn't want to chill the committee's free thinking. However, because of the potential disconnect, this led to having a liaison appointed from the Board of Judges and the first was Judge Ferguson. She would report back to the Board of Judges after every LAC meeting to keep them informed and to potentially redirect efforts that might be fruitless in the end. She also would seek feedback on issues from the Board of Judges to help inform the LAC projects. There was a period where many of the Judges started to attend the LAC instead of just the liaison Judge. Eventually this was seen as potentially stunting the free exchange of ideas before they had a chance to percolate. Now the LAC is back to having just the liaison Judge (now Judge Gravelle) and Chief Judge Ferguson attends every meeting.

Who has been your favorite LAC chair to work with?

I will not bite at this question!!!! However, I will tell you that to a person every chair has put their heart and soul into the work of the LAC. There have been so many great ideas and solid work to come from the group over the years that I don't think we would have the Court that we have today without them.

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Who has been your favorite Judge to work with?

Once again I won't bite. They have all, at one point or another, been extraordinarily "fun". If I start at my beginning we only had three active Judges: Commisa, Devito and Stark. I could tell you stories about each and why they were enjoyable to be with. That of course doesn't mean they were always fun or that I was always on top of my game. As a relatively young and inexperienced manager, they were incredibly patient with me as was the entire staff.

Shortly thereafter came Judges Gindin, Gambardella and Wizmur. All great, fun loving people. Judge Gambardella and Wizmur loved to laugh and enjoy themselves and always brought grace and style to the Court. They had many adventures together but you will have to ask them about those yourself. After Judge Devito passed away, Judge Tuohey joined the Court and he of course was the biggest prankster. He was an incredibly funny man who loved to poke good natured fun even towards the occasionally irascible Judge Commisa. When the Court expanded to 7 Judges, Judges Moore and Stripp joined the bench. Judge Moore was legendary for his jokes from the bench as well as his green robe. Judge Stripp, beneath that very serious exterior was an incredibly funny guy who was the butt of several internal jokes that he always took well. Judge Winfield had an incredibly dry sense of humor but loved to laugh and always good natured. Judge Burns was as affable as anyone could be but was generally quiet in delivering jokes in any direction. Judge Ferguson was known as the party judge and rightfully so. Not only did she party in graveyards and her chambers and her residence, but she celebrated St. Patrick's Day with me in 4 different states as well numerous locations around New Jersey. Judge Lyons had an incredibly dry sense of humor.

Judge Steckroth is a dear, dear friend and he more than anybody knew how to tease me just about anything. I think that I was the favorite target of both Judges Stern and Kaplan. It is a wonderful thing when you can be completely honest and open with someone and they feel comfortable enough to use it in a joke about you. That was the two of them to a tee. I had known Judge Gravelle for a long time because of her partnership with my dear friend Joe Markowitz. Being with the two of them was some of the most fun I have ever had in my life.

The recent group of Judges: Altenburg, Papalia, Sherwood, Poslusny and Meisel have been with the Court just a short time but are fun, energetic and I am sorry I won't get to spend more time with them. I was fortunate to have a relationship with each of them before they came on the bench and I knew that they would be a lot of fun.

So you can see that picking one Judge as the most fun would be completely impossible for me.

You have been instrumental in programming for the Court's Historical Society. What do you think the most impactful program has been?

Even though I had a great time making films for the Society and am very proud of them, without doubt the history of our Court publication "This Honorable Court" by Professor Mark Lender was the Historical Society's greatest achievement. Largely responsible for this was Judge Ronald Hedges who worked tirelessly with Professor Lender. However, if you are going to discuss the Historical Society, you have to recognize the center,

the glue, the inspiration, Donald Robinson. There is no doubt in my mind that our Historical Society is the best in the country because of him.

You have served in various national roles during your time as Clerk. What challenges do you find bankruptcy courts across the country are facing? What do you think other courts can learn from our Court? What do you think we can learn from them?

I think I probably covered the challenges of the courts in my earlier comments, but I believe that there is a lot we can learn from other courts.

At the risk of being incredibly proud of our national bankruptcy community, there is a reason that we are held in such high regard as resilient, innovative and progressive organizations. We have been children of necessity. What I mean by that is we were constantly facing a myriad of legislative, financial and organizational challenges. Each time we came up with a new way of doing something. Most new ideas did not come from Washington but from individual courts around the country who saw a need and went the extra mile to come up with those new, less expensive, inspiring ways of doing things. I believe that is what bankruptcy courts do. They share their ideas and seek each other out for help and inspiration. I know our district will continue to do that.

How do you envision our LAC assisting with the challenges facing our Court?

I think by continuing the path that they are on. They need to reach out beyond themselves to take the pulse of the bar to identify problems, solutions and concerns and bring those to the attention of the Court.

Do you think practitioners utilize the LAC as the great resource it is? If not, how do you think communications between the practitioners and LAC can be improved?

I think communication can always be improved. Unfortunately, people don't always read newsletters, blogs, emails. We all live extraordinarily busy lives. Blast emails about agendas, minutes, etc. are always helpful. The most important quality that a group can have that represents a larger group is transparency. I am teased a lot about this but I was known as Mr. Survey in the Court. You need to work at getting feedback from your constituency through surveys and seminars. If people think that they are being heard and informed they will trust the vehicle and participate more.

What is your favorite LAC memory?

The LAC, on the whole, is just a great memory!!!

Finally, I was given an extraordinary gift when I was appointed to this job over 32 years ago. I want to thank the entire bankruptcy community for all they have done to make this the best Bankruptcy Court family in the country.

2016 holidays photos of Jim with members of the Clerk’s Office:



(Newark)



(Trenton)

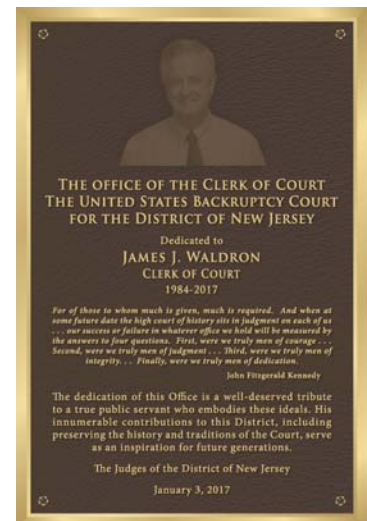


(Camden)

Dedication of the Clerk’s office of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey

On December 15, 2016, the District of New Jersey announced the dedication of the three Clerks Office’s to Jim Waldron in recognition of Jim’s service to the District and the Bar. A plaque recognizing Jim and his service will be installed in each office. An excerpt of the text from the plaque is included below:

“The dedication of this Office is a well-deserved tribute to a true public servant who embodies these ideals. His innumerable contributions to this District, including preserving the history and traditions of the Court, serve as an inspiration for future generations.”



On November 16, 2016, in recognition of Jim Waldron's career and his many accomplishments, at the Hilton in East Brunswick, NJ, the following remarks were made by Jim's daughter Keara Waldron, Esquire and our new Chief Clerk, Jeanne Naughton.

Dinner Remarks

by Keara Waldron

Good evening. Thank you, Judge Kaplan, and thank you everyone who made it out tonight to honor my father – someone who many of you know is a man who is both incredibly important to and deeply admired by me.

I first want to say a special thank you to this evening's hosts - IWIRC, NJBLF, the New Jersey Federal Bankruptcy Bar Association, the Bankruptcy Law Section of the New Jersey State Bar

Association, the New York Institute of Credit, and the New Jersey Turnaround Management Association. Thank you for putting together such a wonderful event and a fitting tribute.

This is a pretty unique opportunity and one that I feel very honored to have. I don't know many daughters who get to stand in front of a large captive audience of her colleagues and talk about what a great guy her dad is.



For those of you who don't know me, I'm Jim's middle daughter. I'm here tonight with several members of my family – my mother Kate, my sisters Clare and Colleen, my brother in law Matt, my dad's brother and sister – Mickey and Mary, and their respective spouses, Paula and Roger, and two of my maternal aunts – Lily and Clare. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we are very honored and proud to be here tonight, so thank you on behalf of all of us.

While I have been a member of the New Jersey bankruptcy bar since 2012 when Ken Rosen was

generous enough to bring me into Lowenstein's bankruptcy practice, and a member of the federal family since 2011 when I had the honor of serving as law clerk to the Honorable Dennis M. Cavanaugh, my introduction to the New Jersey bankruptcy community happened long before that. In fact, the New Jersey Bankruptcy Court has

been somewhat of an extended family to us from the moment I was born.

Throughout my life, and particularly during the past five years, I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of many of you in this room. And during that time, I have heard ad nauseum what a great guy my dad is and what he has meant to so many of you.

I suspect that we'll be hearing much more of that as tonight goes on. So, I would like take this

opportunity to tell you all some things you may not know about my father, most important of which is what he has meant to me and to the rest of my family.

My dad is not your average dad, and my relationship with him is anything but typical. My father has never been just a father. He's been a coach, a chauffeur, a hair stylist (albeit not a very good one), amateur film maker, a confidante, a care taker, teacher, advocate and biggest fan, and at times toughest critic, a steady source of both embarrassment and pride, and above all, a best friend. No matter what he's done, he has always pushed me and my sisters to be the best version of ourselves and has done all that he could to see to it that we had every opportunity. There is literally nothing that he wouldn't do or hasn't done for his family.

Without addressing every single one of the many hats my dad has worn over the past 32 years, and there are many, I would like to address just a few that I think are most emblematic of the man we are all honoring tonight.

Caretaker. When I was 12, my grandfather – affectionately known to us as Bumps - was not getting on on his own so well anymore and it was decided by the extended family that it would be best if he were to live with a family member. Without hesitation, my parents stepped up and invited him into our home. They continued to care for him – making many sacrifices along the way – for the next seven years until he passed away peacefully in our home. And not only that, my dad has stepped up to be there for so many of us in our times of need. He has been a support through our struggles, a guide through our missteps, and perspective when we've needed it most – including, for example, playing Bonnie Raitt's "I can't make you love me" when I broke up with a high school boyfriend.

Chauffeur. I'd be remiss if I let this evening go by without quoting the late great Joe Markowitz, one of my dad's dearest friends. Joe was captured in one of

the many films made by the court staff – NOT one of my dad's cinematic blockbusters about some obscure detail of New Jersey court history that I'm sure many of you have been subjected to. But in the film, Joe commented about what a "sweet guy" my dad is. I don't have the direct quote in front of me but I recall it going something like this, and delivered in a way that only Joe could deliver, "What a sweet guy. If anyone ever needed a ride to the airport, Jim would take you to the airport." I have certainly been the beneficiary of many of those rides to the airport – at all hours of the morning and night - as well as countless other rides around the tristate area and beyond for various sporting events and practices – including 22 hour round trip drives to Notre Dame. There was never a time too inconvenient, or a distance too far – he truly would always drive you to the airport.

Big Kid. And no, not just because he's stubborn and has to be right all the time. There hasn't been a problem that he hasn't found a way to meet with humor. And with that, he has taught us that its ok to let go, be ourselves, and most importantly, to always find a way to laugh no matter what problem we were facing. And believe me, as the father of three daughters, there were many.

Superhero. He probably doesn't want me to talk about this, but I'm going to anyway. My dad is a two time cancer survivor. And ten years ago after his second bout of cancer and many subsequent medical issues to follow, his doctors didn't think he would ever come back to work full time or really lead a normal life. Boy did he prove them wrong. Despite continuing to encounter daily struggles even to this day, over the past ten years alone he served on countless national committees, developed numerous documentaries and programs for the Historical Society, was inducted into the St. Benedicts hall of fame, received the Donald A. Robinson Meritorious Service Award, hosted numerous diversity initiatives in the Court, rolled out the NextGen electronic filing

system (and some pretty sharp “NextGen” jackets to commemorate the launch), been inducted into the prestigious American College of Bankruptcy, and became a grandpa, just to name a few. He continues to defy odds and expectations, all so that he can be there for his family and others.

Example. Probably the most impactful lesson my dad ever taught me was when I was probably 13 and contemplating the meaning of life, as most 13 year olds do. My dad told me that he believed that we are all here to do what we can to make each other’s lives better. And I can think of no better living example of that sentiment. I think that’s why my dad wears so many hats – and overextends himself so much, even when maybe his body is telling him not to. Because it has allowed him to be so many things to so many different people – ones he knew well, and ones he hardly knew at all. From interns, to staff, to attorneys, judges, St. Benedicts students, grade school students on field trips to the court house, pro se litigants and just random people he met on the street or in one of the many Newark watering holes. It didn’t matter who you were, he was always willing to help.

He leaves a legacy behind him that I have no doubt Jeannie and Mo will do well to carry on. The future of the New Jersey bankruptcy court is certainly in great hands. To all of you, thank you for being our extended family for all these 32 years – we have truly valued the friendship and support you have provided not only my dad, but our family as well. And dad, thank you for being you, for enabling us to be the best versions of ourselves, and for showing us strength, courage, dedication and true love. Thank you for all that you’ve done, and all that you continue to do. I think we’re all going to miss you around here, but no one more than me. We love you.

Dinner Remarks

by Jeanne Naughton

The words “home” and “family” may seem an odd choice in this professional setting, even during this week before Thanksgiving when they are so much on our minds. Yet, Mo Wong and I have been tasked with the impossible, to convey in a few brief moments on behalf of our office, his office, what it means to live and work in “the house that Jim built.”

There is an expression that “whatever good things we build, end up building us.” This is so true with Jim. He left it all on the “field” to such an extent, his contributions so impactful, that it is futile to try to determine where he leaves off, and where we begin.

For those of us who are familiar with his reach, it may come as no surprise to learn, as we did on one of our many road trips together, that Jim has building in his blood.

Jim’s forbearers, at the Waldron Construction Company, with headquarters on Broad Street in Newark, were responsible at the turn of the twentieth century for structures no less impressive than Newark’s City Hall, the five story beaux arts building with the golden dome, and the magnificent Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, the fifth largest cathedral in North American, and one on par with any in Europe.

So imagine the most fantastic house in which you have had the privilege of living and working for the past thirty-two years. For some of you that is longer than your lifetime. For others, it is a span of time that would bridge raising children from birth to well into their adulthood.

Moment by moment, decade upon decade, Jim Waldron built the foundation of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey, the hard way. He built it from the inside out, with solid relationships cemented with trust and loyalty, and he built it—sometimes literally, by hand.

Do not let his quiet humility as a leader fool you; he does the heaviest lifting himself.

From his desk in one of the three federal courthouses in Newark, Trenton or Camden, or from one of his gadgets from which he contacts us from the road or rails, Jim display an innate understanding of people and an indefatigable passion for his work.

He challenges and inspires each of us who are lucky enough to be in his orbit, to dig deeper, work harder, stand taller and dream bigger.

To give you a snapshot, Jim's office is a jumble of computer wires, monitors, printers, books and papers. At the helm, he resembles the revered head of mission control. As he masterfully stewards the people, resources, and projects entrusted to his care, he does it in such a way as to make his style of leadership uniquely his own.

To understand this, I want to take you back in time with me to my first day on the job as Jim's staff attorney. Fresh from a career clerkship, legal pad and pen in hand, I brought what I thought was my "A" game, to his office. I remember thinking, "Apply a linear analysis to whatever problem he gives you. Recite the facts, frame the issues, and weave in the law. No problem. Okay (I thought), I got this."

I could not have been more wrong. Little did I know that the new normal, which I now would not trade for anything in the world, was about to unfold.

Without ever informing me why I was there and not five minutes into our meeting, Jim told me to stop taking notes. What happened in the next fifty-five minutes is still something of a blur. There were several office "drive bys" and knocks at his door by members of his staff, who were anxiously awaiting his advice. A menu was planned for an upcoming dinner meeting, an agenda was set for the bench bar, a call was taken from a chief judge of another district

with whom Jim sits on the National Rules Advisory Committee.

We briefly discussed statistics, staffing, and supporting our judges in their work. A friend called with an invitation to lunch in the Ironbound. There was a film for the Historical Society that needed to be made, and we listened to music he selected for its score. We then reviewed on his computer screen, a

copy of an old newspaper clipping heralding a bankruptcy case most of us have long forgotten, if ever we knew of it at all.

The pendulum on the wall clock in his office, which is shaped like a bottle of Jameson's Irish Whiskey, struck the passing of the hour. It was still not clear why I had been called into his office, but I had stopped caring about that altogether. What I sensed was something more valuable...more transformative...and a lot more fun. I was in the



presence of a man in his element, a maestro with his orchestra.

What I came to realize over time is what anyone who has worked with him can tell you: this is the way that Jim Waldron rolls, and if you roll with him, the result is often better than you, or anyone else, has a right to expect. In fact, with Jim as the secret ingredient in the mix, the sum is always greater than its parts: one plus one equals three.

I could go on to tell you how the windows of the house that Jim built are truly awe inspiring, with the view changing constantly like a kaleidoscope--because they are, and it does. Or, I could tell you how on the walls of his house, he hung art of every genre and in its corridors and public spaces, he restored and installed sculptures--because he did.

I could tell you how he filled our library with history books and documentaries of his own making. Or how he championed the many cultures within our federal court family and filled our kitchen with celebrations of African American, Irish, Spanish, Italian, Jewish, and Pan Asian, food, music, and dance. Or, how when we should have been out buying Christmas or Hanukah presents, we spent every holiday with him, laughing about the events of the day in a manner that always reminded me of the best of Seinfeld.

But all of this, as full a cup as it is, would be missing the point if we were to turn the channel and leave our hero right here. We would be missing the answer to probably the most often asked question about our Superman: how does he do it? The answer is summed up in one word: love.

It's been said that people come into our lives for a reason or a season, but that some of them stay and change us forever. For those of us here tonight to honor him, Jim Waldron is that person. I know he is for Mo and me and virtually every member of our Court who is blessed with the privilege of knowing him. Jim understands what the Prophet Kahill Gibran

taught so many years ago: "work is love made visible."

To close, I would like to quote the author Ray Bradbury's book, Fahrenheit 451, in which he writes of the words of a wise grandfather:

It doesn't matter what you do, he said, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that's like you after you take your hands away. The difference between the man who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching, he said. The lawn-cutter might just as well not have been there at all; the gardener will be there a lifetime.

So to you Jim, our gardener, builder, boss, mentor, colleague, and most of all, friend, we won't say goodbye, but we will say to TAP to you and your beautiful family, "God bless you."

Love you brother, thanks for everything.



19TH ANNUAL WILLIAM H. GINDIN BANKRUPTCY BENCH-BAR CONFERENCE

Just a reminder:

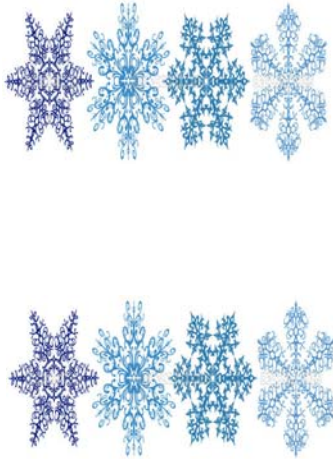
The 2017 Bench-Bar Conference will be held on

Friday, March 10, 2017, 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

At

Hilton East Brunswick
3 Tower Center Blvd
East Brunswick, NJ 08816-1143

Jim with members of the LAC at the 2015 annual District of New Jersey Holiday Party. Pictured left to right: Joseph Casello, Mohung Wong, Morris Bauer, Ross Switkes, Carrie Boyle, Anne Cantwell, William Mackin, Karina Lucid, Jim Waldron, Shoshana Schiff, Louis Modugno, and Stacey Adams (member of the District Court LAC).



LAC members enjoying the 2016 holiday season at the annual District of New Jersey party. Pictured clockwise from the tree: Carrie Boyle, Ross Switkes, Louis Modugno, Shoshana Schiff, William Mackin, Michael Viscount, Catherine Youngman, David Beslow, Morris Bauer, Mark Hall, Karina Lucid, and Cassandra Porter



Message from the LAC Chair: William Mackin

I am amazed at the LAC's accomplishments during the past year and at the changes occurring during that time. First and foremost we say goodbye to two exceptional friends on their retirement, James J. Waldron, Clerk of the Court and Mary Shashaty, Deputy Clerk of the Court in Camden. No words can ever fully express the deep gratitude we, as the collective New Jersey bankruptcy family, owe to each of these dedicated professionals. It remains only for us to sincerely wish them both a long, active, healthy, and fulfilling retirement. At the same time the LAC looks forward to working with their successors. We anticipate that Jeanne Naughton, as the new Clerk of the Court and Sean Quigley, as the new Deputy Clerk of the Court in Camden will continue to make our District the finest forum in which to undertake bankruptcy practice.

The LAC's membership and structure has also changed. Joseph Casello, Virginia Fortunato, and Brian Nicholas completed their terms of service in 2016. New members E. Richard Dressel, Brian Hofmeister, and Kim R. Lynch provide us with extensive and varied practice experience moving forward. Isabel C. Balboa joins the LAC as the representative for the standing chapter 13 trustees. Mark Hall joins the LAC as the representative for the New Jersey Federal Bankruptcy Association.

Despite these changes, the LAC's work continues. Next year will be a busy one. We must decide if the District will adopt the national form chapter 13 plan or continue to use a local form chapter 13 plan. If we retain a local form it must be revised to comply with Fed.R.Bankr.P. 3015.1. The chapter 13 no-look fee rule is under review. We are examining local rules and forms related to case reinstatement. Our discussion of local rules establishing best practices for consumer chapter 7 cases continues. Forms and procedures to strengthen the loss mitigation program and loan modification orders are under review. We are considering whether to adopt a local rule for a combined hearing on disclosure statement approval and plan confirmation in a liquidating chapter 11 case. We are reviewing numerous issues concerning Small Business Cases. Our Newsletter Subcommittee is always preparing the next issue of the "The Absolute Priority." and welcomes news, input, and ideas from the Bar.

The LAC's meeting minutes will identify all current discussion topics. They are posted on the Court's website. Take time to review them. Please also bring to our attention any matters that we are not currently considering, such as proposed new local rules, suggestions for changes to existing local rules or forms, or any ideas to improve consumer or commercial bankruptcy practice in the District of New Jersey. Don't be shy! We have made it easy to submit your ideas and comments by way of a hyperlink on the Court's website under the "Lawyer's Advisory Committee" tab. You can also present them to any current LAC member, whose names are also on the Court's website.

TAP**Officers:**

William Mackin (LAC Chairperson);
Catherine Youngman (LAC Vice-Chair);
Chief Judge Katherine Ferguson;
Hon. Christine Gravelle, LAC Liaison

LAC Members/ Liaisons:

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